

# THE WAY WIVES ARE



With a breathless, choking sensation Wilbur pulled out his checkbook and wrote.

ON the way Wilbur tried to figure out how it had happened. It couldn't have happened. But it had happened. He had spent half his savings in one lump. He had contracted to spend the other half. Anita was spending her savings too—in slightly smaller lumps. How much had the president meant by a "substantial raise"? Had the president actually put the raise through? It ought to appear in his monthly salary check on the last day of February. But would it? The president might think the new salary should begin with March.

He bought a bunch of violets for Anita at the corner. Could he face her? Could he keep his awful secret? He shut his teeth savagely.

Anita met him at the door. "Oh, Wilbur," she cried. "The greatest piece of luck in the world—Aunt Emma's girandoles—they've sent them to us—they're my share of her things!"

"Girandoles?" said Wilbur weakly. "Yes—magnificent French mirrors—rare antiques—herirlooms! Get the janitor to open them up—but he must be horribly careful!"

"Don't you think we'd better let them stay stacked until we get out to the country?" she asked.

"Oh, no-o-o-o!"

Wilbur got the janitor up and the boxes open. They set one of the girandoles on the buffet at one end of the dining room and the other on the side table opposite.

Anita looked at one: the massive frame, with its delicate and elaborate carving, the slender, curving candle-labra, and in the center the round mirror that mysteriously reflected the whole room. It was a fine example of the craftsmanship of another age than ours.

"Isn't it a perfect beauty?" she cried.

The phrase reminded Wilbur unhappily of the salesman's remark about the Smithsonian twin-two. He hoped his unhappiness didn't show in his face. Anita had turned round to look at the other girandole.

"Of course," she explained, "they don't show off properly with this furniture of ours and in this little room and not properly hung. But you wait! They'll be the keynote."

"Keystone?" said Wilbur, stupidly.

"Of course," said Anita. "That's the way a decorator works. He takes some one perfect thing as a start and then builds around it—gets everything to go with it. These girandoles are the perfect thing, the true Victorian keynote. Oh, Wilbur, we'll just have to have that lovely tilt-top table!"

"I thought it cost three hundred dollars."

"Only two hundred and ninety-five," said Anita. "But it's the perfect thing. With these girandoles at either end of the living room and that tilt-top table—it was a big table, you know—and that English sofa, why, we'll hardly need another thing!"

The check he had given the salesman of the Smithsonian car would just

about pay for the tilt-top table and the sofa Anita wanted, but it did not seem to Wilbur a good time to say so.

WILBUR spent most of his lunch hours looking at the perfect pieces of furniture Anita discovered in her shopping tours. Sometimes he got up enough courage to shake his head dubiously over Anita's enthusiasm of the moment; more often he didn't. The only way to still her excitement over the house she was going to have would be to tell her about the car. He couldn't do that. Every time he thought about it he dubbed himself a selfish hound; and every time he saw a Smithsonian car in the street he automatically stopped to admire it—until he was with Anita. He had a sandwich and a glass of milk for lunch whenever he was alone, and took a surprising comfort in the seventy-five or eighty cents he saved thereby.

The last day of February came—5 o'clock of the last day of February came. At one minute after 5 the young man from the Treasurer's office came to Wilbur's desk with the envelope containing Wilbur's check.

Wilbur thrust the envelope casually into his pocket. The moment the young man had passed on Wilbur tore open the envelope. The check was the same as usual. His increase had not yet appeared.

Wilbur ran a blind ad. the next day in the want columns of an afternoon paper, offering to sell his contract for a Smithsonian. He got a dozen offers, but the best of them involved a loss of \$250 of his original \$500.

Wilbur pinned his hope on the envelope he would open March 31, and when March 31 brought the same old check Wilbur went into executive session with himself. He decided that if he did not have a bigger check on April 30 he would speak to the President. It was not good psychology to raise the question with the President. It was much better for the President to speak first. But if the President continued to be dumb Wilbur would simply have to act.

They moved to Sparborough on April 14. When Wilbur got back to his office on the 17th he had a letter from the Smithsonian salesman notifying him that his car was ready and would be delivered on payment of another \$500 in cash and five notes for \$100 each.

Wilbur had a crazy impulse to draw the check and sign the notes and drive the new car out to Sparborough. Perhaps if Anita saw it in all its brand-newness—the perfect thing—she would forgive him.

He wondered how much money they had spent on furniture. He avoided keeping track of it on purpose, and the bills hadn't come in yet. He had an awful feeling that it might run over \$2,000. And he would have to pay it all within two months—three at the most. Wilbur did not draw the check for the second \$500. Instead he bought gardenias for Anita.

Sunday proved one of those harbingers of summer that are more lovely than summer ever is. Wilbur and Anita took a long walk in the afternoon exploring Sparborough, and

winding up at their friends', the Singletons, for tea. It was dark when they approached their own little white house, with its green blinds and its Dutch gable and its neat hedge of box.

"Look," said Anita softly. The living room windows, with their small, square panes, were patterns of yellow light. Anita took his arm as they walked up the brick path to the front door. "And to think—it's already just as perfect inside as it is out."

Wilbur threw open the front door with a glow of pride. They paused in the hall to survey the living room through the wide arch. There was the deep-cushioned sofa in front of the fireplace, the lovely tilt-top table with its Victorian lamp of glass, and at either end were girandoles reflecting the room, enlarging it. What did cost matter? Who could think of money at such a time?

"Wilbur," said Anita, "what about our raise? Hasn't the President said anything?"

Wilbur frowned. Wilbur cleared his throat. Wilbur put his hands in his pockets.

"I think it's time you spoke to him about it. He hasn't kept his promise."

"I think he wanted to try me out before he decided just how much the raise would be," said Wilbur. "It isn't good psychology for me to speak first, at least not just now."

"But what if he doesn't speak at all? We can't go on like this much longer."

"Why can't we go on like this?"

"We're spending money just as if our income had been increased, and it hasn't."

"I will be," said Wilbur. "You know our annual salesmen's convention is coming on next week. It will give me my best chance to show what I can do. When I get back I will speak to the President."

"I would," said Anita slowly. "That means," Anita continued, "that you'll be away from home a whole week, doesn't it?"

"Ten days," said Wilbur. "I am to go on ahead to Cleveland and get some charts ready for the opening day."

"I wish you didn't have to leave now," said Anita.

"So do I," Wilbur said, but it wasn't true. Wilbur wanted to get away for ten days. Wilbur wanted a respite.

WILBUR put in so busy a ten days in Cleveland that he hardly thought about the Smithsonian car or his financial predicament or the raise he might have to ask for. But he could no longer put these things out of his mind when, at ten minutes after five on the third of May he reached his desk in Broad Street. The offices of Whitworth & Co. were nearly empty. Wilbur felt very much alone as he contemplated the stack of mail on his desk. So much of it contained bills. Wilbur opened them automatically, smoothing out the folds and glancing at the totals. There was two hundred and ninety-five for the tilt-top table,

and two hundred and sixty for the deep-cushioned sofa, and eighty for the glass lamp. And that was only one room. Wilbur picked up a pencil and memorandum pad and began to jot down items. The total came to more than fifteen hundred. And, of course, these were only the new accounts. When he got home he would find the usual bill from the department store multiplied by the addition of curtains and rugs and kitchen utensils and garden tools and what not.

Perhaps three or four hundred dollars. The second payment of five hundred on the car was overdue. When that was paid, he would still have to pay a hundred a month for five months, to say nothing of upkeep. He had \$1,153 minus five hundred in bank; this made \$653. His monthly salary check—but what would his monthly bills for food and rent and services would have to come out of? Would there be anything left? Wilbur guessed that, counting the car, he was perhaps two thousand dollars behind; not counting the five hundred that he must pay immediately on the car, he was fifteen hundred dollars behind.

Wilbur wondered if a clerk was still lingering in the treasurer's office. He could not bear to go home without knowing the amount of his salary check for April. Wilbur tried the inner-office telephone, but it was no use. The treasurer's office did not answer. He would have to wait until morning to know.

Wearily Wilbur picked up his bag. He must catch the first train to Sparborough. He must have a serious talk with Anita. He must make her see the predicament they were in. Perhaps he could borrow some money and in a year, by living very economically, they would get even again. If they sacrificed the car, they wouldn't be in such a bad way. They could pull out somehow. Only, how could Anita live economically?

Women had no idea of the value of money, no proper fear of debts, no business sense. Anita had no real conception of their income. She had wanted a car. She had wanted something that supplied them. Wilbur bought some pale yellow roses for Anita at the entrance of the Grand Central Terminal. They cost four dollars. But what difference did four dollars make when you were broke? Wilbur's bag tugged heavily at the end of his arm as he walked down the long ramp into the station. He ran plumb into the President of Whitworth and Company.

"Why, Rudge, I'm awfully glad to see you. Where are you going?"

Wilbur shook hands.

"I am living out in Sparborough now."

"That's fine," the President said. "That's right. I do think anybody who lives on Manhattan Island is a chump."

"We like it much better in the country."

Wilbur wondered if the subject of living in the country did not lead naturally to the subject of an increase in salary. But he could hardly brace the President for a raise in the Grand Central Terminal.

"Of course you do," said the President. "By the way, Rudge, I hear you did a corking good job out there

in Cleveland. You're making good. You haven't forgotten what we said about raising your salary?"

"No," said Wilbur. "Well, sir," he said in his hearty voice, "we're going to start you off at six thousand. And, by the way—that's retroactive. Your new salary

begin Feb. 15. I think you'll find the treasurer has a check waiting for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Wilbur. "That's handsome of you."

"Not at all. You've got it coming. I hope it won't be long before we'll have to do more than that for you."

WILBUR speculated all the way out to Sparborough on how Anita would take it. He was afraid she would be bitterly disappointed. Oddly enough, he was not disappointed himself. He was terribly relieved. He could not help smiling as he went up the walk to his house. The front door had been laid on the living room hearth in honor of his home coming and they sat in the deep-cushioned sofa and Anita did a piece of hem-stitching while Wilbur smoked. It was the hour of charm. Wilbur could not crash into it with a discussion of

money. He pushed the thought of money from him and looked around the room so simple, so perfect, and so expensive. And how Anita adorned it.

"Anita," he said suddenly, "our new salary is six thousand a year."

Anita dropped her hands. Her bit of linen fell to the floor.

"Oh, Wilbur!" she cried. "I knew it. I knew it. I knew it!"

She jumped up and kissed him. "Aren't you disappointed?"

"Of course not—we can do beautifully on six thousand."

Wilbur knew that this was the psychological moment to tell Anita

no getting around that. Anita had a new dress, a dress of soft dark silk that set off her small blond head. And there was a leg of lamb, the roast he liked best for dinner. With food, Wilbur lost his feeling that the bottom had dropped out of everything. He smiled across the yellow roses at Anita, and Anita smiled back.

After dinner Wilbur lit the fire that had been laid on the living room hearth in honor of his home coming and they sat in the deep-cushioned sofa and Anita did a piece of hem-stitching while Wilbur smoked. It was the hour of charm. Wilbur could not crash into it with a discussion of

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THE TILT-TOP TABLE WAS ALL THAT ANITA SAID IT WAS.

## THE SHEIK BY HULL

THE MOST TALKED ABOUT STORY IN TEN YEARS

### CHAPTER XX.

(Continued)

DIANA drew a quick breath. While the man was still in the adjoining room the moment for which she was waiting seemed interminable. And now she wished he had not gone. He stood between her and—what? For the first time since the coming of Saint Hubert she was alone with him, really alone. Only a curtain separated them, a curtain that she could not pass. She longed to go to him, but she did not dare. She was pulled between love and fear, and for a moment fear was in the ascendant. She shivered, and a sob rose in her throat.

She only wanted to lie in his arms and sob her heart out against his. She was starving for the touch of his hands, suffering horribly.

She slid down on to her knees, burying her face in the couch.

"Oh, God! Give me his love!" she kept whispering in agonized entreaty, until the recollection of the night, months before, when in the same posture she had prayed that God's curse might fall on him, sent a shudder through her.

"I didn't mean it," she moaned. "Oh, dear God! I didn't mean it. I didn't know. . . . Take it back. I didn't mean it."

There was silence in the next room except for the striking of a match that came with monotonous regularity. Another hour of waiting would drive her mad.

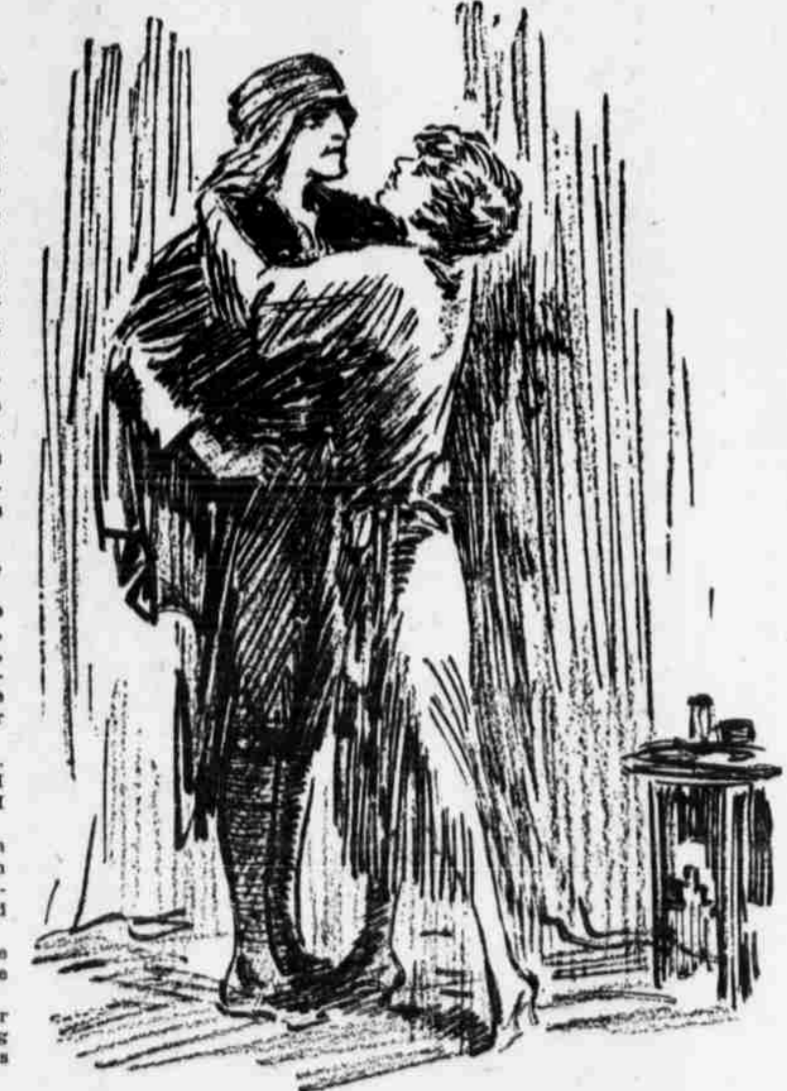
She set her teeth and, crossing the room, slipped noiselessly between the curtains.

She looked at him hungrily, her eyes ranging slowly over the long length of him and lingering on his bent head.

"Ahmed!" she whispered. He lifted his head slowly and looked at her, and the sight of his face sent her on to her knees beside him, her hands clutching the breast of his soft shirt.

He caught her groping hands, and, pulling her gently to her feet, his fingers clenched round hers, looking down at her strangely. Then he turned from her without a word, and wrenching open the flap of the tent, flung it back and stood in the open doorway staring out into the night.

"What is it?" she whispered again breathlessly.



"I CAN'T GO, AHMED, I CAN'T GO!"

"It is that we start for Oran tomorrow," he replied.

"You are sending me away?" she gasped slowly.

The curt monosyllable lashed her like a whip. She reeled under it, panting and wild-eyed. "Why?"

He did not answer and the color flamed suddenly into her face.

"It is because you are tired of me?" she muttered at last hoarsely, "as

you told me you would tire, as you tired of those other women?" Her voice died away with an accent of horror in it.

He spoke at length in the same level, first desert station outside of Oran, where you can join the train. For your own sake I must not be seen with you in Oran, as I am known there."

She flung up her head. Quick, suspicious jealousy and love and pride

contending nearly choked her. "Why don't you speak the truth?" she cried wildly. "Why don't you say what you really mean—that you have no further use for me, that it amused you to take me and torture me to satisfy your whim, but the whim is passed. How many times a year does Gaston take your discarded mistresses back to France?"

He swung round swiftly and flung his arms about her, crushing her to him savagely, forgetting his strength, his eyes blazing. "God! Do you think it is easy to let you go? My life will be hell without you!"

His arms were like a vise hurting her, but they felt like heaven, and she clung to him speechless, her heart throbbing wildly.

"I mustn't kiss you," he said huskily, as he put her from him gently. "I don't think I should have the courage to let you go if I did. I didn't mean to touch you."

He turned from her with a little gesture of weariness.

Fear fled back into her eyes. "I don't want to go," she whispered faintly.

"You don't understand. There is no other way," he said dully.

"If you really loved me you would not let me go," she cried, with a miserable sob.

"If I loved you?" he echoed, with a hard laugh. "If I loved you! It is because I love you so much that I am able to do it. If I loved you a little less I would let you stay and take your chance."

She flung out her hands appealingly. "I want to stay, Ahmed! I love you!" she panted, desperate, for she knew his obstinate determination, and she saw her chance of happiness slipping away.

He did not move or look at her, and his brows drew together in the dreaded heavy frown. "You don't know what you are saying. You don't know what it would mean," he replied in a voice from which he had forced all expression. "If you married me you would have to live always here in the desert. I cannot leave my people, and I am too much of an Arab to let you go alone. It would be no life for you."

"You think you love me now, though God knows how you can after what I have done to you, but a time would come when you would find that you love me. And marriage is for your life here. And marriage with me is unthinkable. You know what I am and what I have been. You know that I am not fit to live with, not fit to be near any decent

woman. You know my devilish temper—it has not spared you in the past, it might not spare you in the future. You must go back to your own country, to your own people, to your own life, in which I have no place or part, and soon all this will seem only like an ugly dream."

She shuddered convulsively. "Ahmed! I can't go!" she wailed.

He looked up sharply, his face livid, and tore her hands from his face.

"Good God! You don't mean—I haven't—you aren't!" he gasped hoarsely, looking down at her with a great fear in his eyes.

She guessed what he meant and the color rushed into her face. The temptation to lie to him and let the consequences rest with the future was more powerful than she could resist. One little word and she would be in his arms . . . but afterward—?

It was the fear of the afterward that kept her silent. The color slowly drained from her face and she shook her head mutely.

He let go her wrists, laid his hand on her shoulder and pushed her gently toward the inner room. With a cry she flung herself on his breast, her face hidden against him, her hands clinging round his neck. "Ahmed! Ahmed! You are killing me. I cannot live without you. I love you and I was your wife. I can't go back to the old life, Ahmed. Have pity on me."

A spasm crossed his face, but his mouth set firmer and he disengaged her clinging hands with relentless fingers.

"I have never been anything else," he said bitterly. "but I am willing that you should think me a brute now rather than you should live to curse the day you ever saw me."

He dropped her hands and turned abruptly, going back to the doorway, looking out into the darkness. "It is

very late. We must start early. Go and lie down."

She shrank back trembling, with piteous, stricken face and eyes filled with a great despair. She knew him as she knew it was the end. She caught at the writing table behind her to steady herself, and her fingers touched the revolver he had laid down.

The contact of the metal sent a chill that seemed to strike her heart. Her mind raced forward feverishly, there were only a few hours left before the morning, before the bitter moment when she must leave behind her forever the surroundings that had become so dear, that had been her home as the old castle in England had never been. She thought of the long journey northward, the agonized traction of her misery riding beside him. The contrast between that ride, when she had lain content in the curve of his strong arm, and the ride that she would take the next day was poignant. She closed her teeth on her trembling lip, her fingers tightened on the handle of the revolver, and a wild light came into her sad eyes. She could never go through with it. To what end would be the hideous torture?

Her life was her own to deal with. Nobody would be injured by its termination. Ahmed, indeed, would benefit considerably. And he—? His figure was blurred through the tears that filled her eyes.

Slowly she lifted the weapon clear of the table with steady fingers and brought her hand stealthily from behind her.

She lifted the revolver to her temple resolutely.

There had been no sound to betray what was passing behind him, but the extra sense, the consciousness of imminent danger that was strong in the desert-bred man, sprang into active

force within the Sheik. He turned like a flash and leaped across the space that separated them, catching her hand as she pressed the trigger.

Her eyes quivered a moment and then opened slowly, looking up into his with a still-lingering fear in them. "You won't send me away?" she whispered pleadingly, like a terrified child.

A hard sob broke from him and he kissed her trembling lips fiercely. "Never!" he said sternly. "I will never let you go now. My God! If you knew how I wanted you. If you knew what it cost me to send you away. Pray God I keep you happy. You know the worst of me, poor child—you will have a devil for a husband!"

The color stole back slowly into her face and a little tremulous smile curved her lips. She slid her arm up and round his neck, drawing his head down. "I am not afraid," she murmured slowly. "I am not afraid of anything with your arms round me, my desert lover. Ahmed! Monseigneur!"

(THE END.)

## Love Will Never Die

By John Hunter

A Story for the Young of Heart

BEGINS—

MONDAY, MAY 29

—IN—

THE EVENING WORLD